

The Freedom to Choose campaign:

Protecting veterans' access
to medical marijuana for
PTSD & other wounds of war

We are
the **Drug
Policy
Alliance.**

Agenda

- Introduction to the Freedom to Choose campaign
- What is the problem?
- What are the campaign objectives?
- Augustine and Anetra Stanley's story
- Discussion

More than two-thirds of New Mexico voters say they support the state's medical marijuana program.

Purpose of the campaign:

- Educate providers, public, lawmakers and employers that medical marijuana is a legitimate health care choice.
- Support and train veterans and their families to become advocates to protect their access to medical marijuana through the policy process.
- Elevate New Mexico as a national model in veterans health care

A strong majority of voters support keeping PTSD as a qualifying condition for medical marijuana in New Mexico

What is the problem?

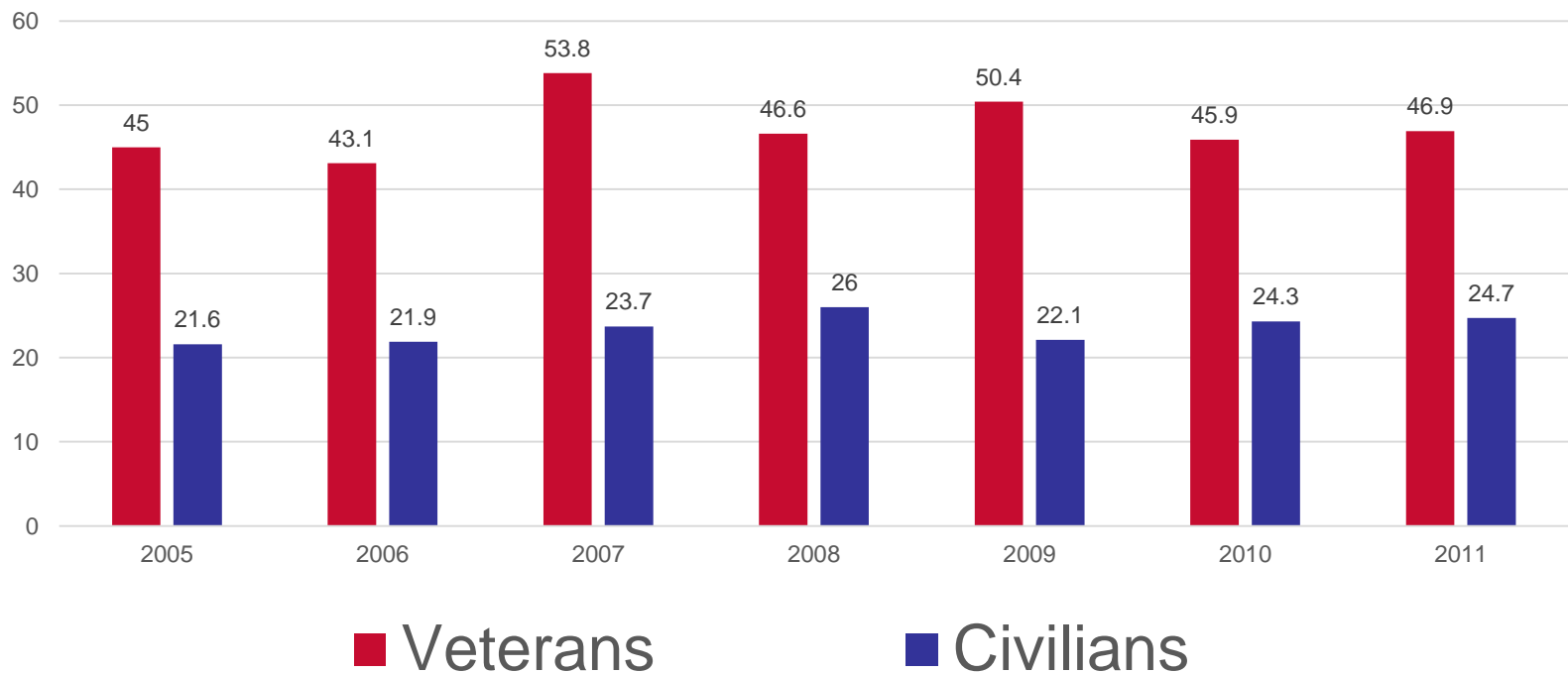
Even though many veterans are reporting medical marijuana is helpful in their lives, many others who may benefit may not be able to access this treatment choice...

- Discrimination by employers
- Cultural stigma
- Shortage of medical professionals referring veterans to the NM medical marijuana program
- Discontinuity of care (veterans are forced to see providers outside the VA medical system in order to become qualified patients)
- Conflict with federal law

What is the problem?

Rates of suicide among veterans are double the rate of the non-military population in New Mexico.

2005-2011 Suicide rates per 100,000 New Mexicans
veterans compared to civilian population



Access to medical marijuana help lower suicide rates

“Cannabis is not only therapeutic, it is significantly safer and less toxic than prescription pain medication. There is no known lethal dose, compared with opiates, which now cause more overdose deaths than car accidents. Cannabis has lower rates of addiction (9 percent) than pain medication (23 percent), alcohol (15 percent), or cigarettes (32 percent).”

- Julie Holland, MD, PhD

The Freedom to Choose: Objectives

Breaking down barriers to accessing medical marijuana...

- Raise awareness among New Mexicans of the beneficial role medical marijuana can play in veterans' lives
- End employment discrimination for qualified medical marijuana patients
- Educate employers and medical professionals about the medical marijuana program
- Connect dots: medical marijuana & reducing suicide

The Freedom to Choose: Activities

- Fall 2013 Public forum for veterans and their families
- Media and civic engagement training for veterans & family members interested in telling their story
- Educational materials and outreach meetings with legislators, employers, medical professionals

Veterans deserve the Freedom to Choose the medicine that works for them.

- US Army Veteran Augustine Stanley (OIF II), and Anetra Stanley

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